

6. WISDOM FOR AND FROM THE PEOPLE

(i) A Popular Text-Book of Philosophy

THE Virasaiva saints began an era in the history of their mother-tongue when they made it the receptacle of their finest thoughts. The vogue grew, popular metres came into use in serious writing and a school of poetry arose addressing itself, to the common man as well as to the scholar. The Haridasa movement strengthened the vogue. Numerous lives of the saints and Puranic stories came to be written in the new style and narrative verse meant for singing was also developed. Kanakadasa wrote a small book of verse which he called *Essence of Devotion*, and a song narrative called *The Stream of Fascination*, dealing with the romantic story of Krishna's grandson and the Asura maiden Usha. *Siva Bhakti Sara* or *Essence of Devotion to Siva*, *Harikathamritasara* or *Essence of the Nectar of Stories of Hari*, and *Anubhavamrita* or the Nectar of Experience, are verse treatises on devotion and religion which became very popular. The last of these came to have great vogue and may be said to have become the text-book of common philosophy. A brief account of its teaching is likely to be of general interest as showing the bent of the popular mind.

The poem was the work of one
Raiiganatha who
had renounced the world and practised
yoga under a
preceptor. Having felt the need of an easy
book in
Kannada teaching the best wisdom to the
people he
wrote this verse treatise in the monther-
tongue. The
author preaches renunciation, describes
the various